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ABSTRACT

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SUMMARY

An anonymous religion poll and the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) were administered to 168 white University of Maryland entering freshmen. The Anonymous Poll consisted of 29 items pertaining to religious beliefs, attendance and issues. The SAS is an instrument designed to measure attitudes of whites toward blacks in ten situations. The results of the study indicate that the relationship between religious and racial attitudes depends on the situation involved as well as the type of religious beliefs and sex of respondent. Those who were active in the church and believed in God and life after death tended to be more tolerant of a black person joining their social group and a black youngster stealing, but were more prejudicial toward a black man raping a white woman. Those with more liberal attitudes toward abortion, marrying outside the faith and not engaging in war, for example, tended to be less prejudiced, while those holding more conservative beliefs on issues such as the above were more prejudiced. Results were discussed in terms of previous research on racial and religious attitudes.

Christian laymen, as a group, are a "rather prejudiced lot" according to Stark and Glock (1969), not only against people of other religions, but against minority groups as well. These authors found that Protestants and Catholics hold "both high moral sentiment and unambiguous prejudice" (Glock and Stark, 1966, p.167). Ninety-one percent of both Protestants and Catholics surveyed in the San Francisco Bay area agreed that "love thy neighbor" means that people of all races should be treated alike. Almost equal percentages agreed that "Negroes ought to have the same rights and opportunities as others." However, when these respondents were asked to apply these philosophies, nearly half said they would probably move if several Negro families moved onto their block. Half of them felt that "Most Negro neighborhoods are rundown because Negroes simply don't take care of property." Approximately 1/3 of the respondents felt that Negroes are less intelligent than whites.

Christian laymen are also opposed to the official church or clergy playing a role in overcoming discrimination. Stark and Glock (1969) cite data from a study by Jeffrey Hadden showing that 70% of the laity denounced clerical involvement in social issues such as civil rights. It is interesting to note that there is a discrepancy between the philosophy and social concern of the official church speakers and clergy on one hand and the laymen on the other. The Hadden study revealed that a large majority of clergy rejected statements of inferiority of blacks and support a more active role of the church in the struggle against discrimination. Stark and Glock attribute much of the church's reluctance to take an active role to the strongly opposing views of the laity, whom they serve. Watts and Free (1973) in their national poll of adult attitudes, found religious groups to be quite moderate in their concern for blacks (pp. 315, 322).

Simpson and Yinger (1965) have reviewed several research studies which indicate that the relationship between religion and prejudice is quite complex. Variables that have been shown as related to prejudice include socioeconomic class, frequency of church attendance, and degree of commitment to the church. Sedlacek and Brooks (1972a) found that racial attitudes varied by situation and sex of respondent. Other studies have shown age and level of education to be related to prejudice (Strickland and Weddell, 1972; Selznick and Steinberg, 1969). The elderly and uneducated tend to be less tolerant of social and cultural diversity in general.

Despite past research there appears to be little available information about the relationship of religion and racial attitudes among college students. Despite evidence that students are generally more liberal, research has shown that white students tend to have negative attitudes toward minorities (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1972a, 1974; Sedlacek, Brooks and Mindus, 1973; Sedlacek, 1973). At the same time other evidence has indicated strong religious interests among many students (Ambrose and Sedlacek, 1972). A further understanding of these phenomena should tell us a great deal more about students as well as about racial and religious attitudes.

Method

The sample consisted of 168 white students who were administered an anonymous religion poll and the Situational Attitude Scale (SAS) Form B during summer freshman orientation programs at the University of Maryland, College Park. The sample was randomly chosen from the orientation students. The poll consisted of 29 items related to religious activity, beliefs and issues. The SAS was designed to measure the attitudes of whites toward blacks in ten situations using semantic differential items, and has been described elsewhere in the literature (Sedlacek and Brooks, 1970a, 1970b, 1972a, 1974).

Data were analyzed using percentages, *F*, Pearson correlation and eta using the .05 level of significance where appropriate.

Results

Forty-five percent of the respondents were male, 51% were female (the remainder failed to respond to that item). Eleven percent listed family income as below $12,000, 40% from $12,000 to $20,000, 29% above $20,000, and 20% responded "unknown." Thirteen percent graduated from a parochial school, but 34% had attended a parochial school at some time. Thirty-three percent of the respondents reported they were Catholic, 22% listed Protestant faiths, 19% listed themselves as Jewish, 8% Atheist, 8% other religions, and 11% failed to respond. Forty percent reported they attended church about once a week during the last year, 13% attended once a month, 18% attended 4 to 11 times a year, 19% attended 1, 2 or 3 times, and 10% not at all. As an indication of these students' beliefs, the following table illustrates their responses when asked to choose the option which best described their feelings:

I believe in a personal God who answers prayer	33%
I believe in a spirit of life	9%
I believe that there are spiritual forces outside of man	11%
I believe that a person has only his/her own resources to call on	13%
I believe in a Supreme Being	32%
No response	2%

No differences in racial attitudes of those choosing the different options were found.

Three other questions which related to religious beliefs were compared to responses on the SAS. Those who agreed that belief in God was important in their lives tended to be least prejudiced in situation VI on the SAS, "You are stopped

for speeding by a black policeman" (r=-.16)[1] and situation VIII, "You see a black youngster steal something from a dimestore" (r=-.16). However, they tended to be less tolerant in situations II, "You read in a paper that a black man has raped a white woman" (r=.26) and IX, "Some black students on campus stage a demonstration"(r=.15). Those students who agreed with the statement "There is no life after death," tended to be more tolerant of a black man raping a white woman (r=-.20), but held a more negative racial attitude when stopped by a black policeman (r=.19), a new black person joining their social group (r=.17), and a black youngster stealing in a dimestore (r=.15).

Those students who attended church most frequently during the last twelve months showed significantly more positive racial attitudes in two situations: being stopped by a black policeman (r=-.16) and seeing a black youngster stealing (r=-.21). Caution should be used in interpreting this finding, however. Allport (1966) cites studies suggesting that the relationship between church attendance and prejudice may be curvilinear such that those who attend very frequently and those who do not attend at all are less prejudiced than those who attend to some degree in between. Those who had attended parochial schools were more negative toward a black man raping a white woman (r=.16) than those who attended public schools.

Those who indicated they enjoyed attending religious meetings were significantly less prejudiced in two of the ten situations. They indicated they would be more tolerant of a new black person joining their social group (r=-.25) and seeing a black youngster stealing (r=-.22). However, they were less tolerant of a black man raping a white woman (r=.15). Those who felt that one must attend a church or synagogue to be religious showed less positive racial responses

[1] The SAS is scored so a high score equals a positive attitude, while the Likert items on the poll were scored so 1=strongly agree and 5= strongly disagree.

to two situations: a new black family moving in next door (r=-.24) and a new black person joining their social group (r=-.16).

Two questions asked dealt with expected attendance in church or use of services of a religious advisor during the coming year. Those who expected to see a chaplain or religious advisor were also more tolerant of a black youngster stealing (r=-.24). But those who intended to become more active in their church or synagogue were significantly less tolerant of a black man raping a white woman (r=.17).

Students who felt religious activity interfered with their progress at school tended to have a more positive racial attitude in the situation "It is evening and a black man appears at your door saying he is selling magazines" (r=-.16), but they were less tolerant of black youngster stealing (r=.18). Those who felt their parents exposed them to too much religion tended to have more positive attitudes in three situations: a black man selling magazines in the evening (r=-.18), black students on campus staging a demonstration (r=-.19) and getting on a bus that has all black people aboard and they are the only one who must stand (r=-.15).

Several questions were asked relative to issues or actions the students would or would not take. Those students who indicated that they would marry someone of another religious preference were significantly less prejudiced in eight of the ten situations: a new black family moving in next door (r=-.36), a black man raping a white woman (r=-.19), a black man selling magazines in the evening (r=-.30), their best friend becoming engaged to a black person (r=-.31), a new black person joining their social group (r=-.26), seeing a black youngster steal (r=-.20), black students staging a demonstration on campus (r=-.16), and getting on a bus filled with blacks and being the only one who must stand (r=-.19).

This supports the findings of others. Stark and Glock (1969), Glock and Stark (1966), and Selznick and Steinberg (1969) discuss the finding that those religious persons who are prejudiced seem to be prejudiced against people of other religions as well as other races.

Those who indicated that they would participate in a "Jesus" movement on campus were significantly less prejudiced in six of ten situations: a black family moving next door (r=-.16), a black man selling magazines in the evening (r=-.18), their best friend becoming engaged to a black person (r=-.19), a black person joining their social group (r=-.19), a black youngster stealing (r=-.24), and black students on campus staging a demonstration (r=-.16).

Those students who felt it was all right to purchase a term paper rather than do it themselves tended to be more tolerant of a black magazine salesman (r=-.16) but less tolerant of a black youngster stealing (r=.18). Those students who could not conscientiously engage in war tended to be less prejudiced in four situations: a black family moving next door (r=-.18), their best friend becoming engaged to a black (r=-.16), a black youngster stealing (r=-.24), and some black students demonstrating on campus (r=-.26). Those who felt abortion was only justified when the mother's life is at stake tended to have a more negative attitude toward a black man who rapes a white woman (r=.20) and black students staging a demonstration (r=.28).

Those who indicated that they would prefer giving money to charity rather than to a church were more tolerant of the black man who rapes a white woman (r=-.15) but less tolerant of being stopped by a black policeman (r=.19) or a black person joining their social group (r=.16). Those students who agreed that they did *not* enjoy listening to "soul" choirs sing "gospel" music were less tolerant of a black family moving next door (r=.16), a black magazine salesman

(r=.28), a black person being engaged to their best friend (r=.25), a new black person joining their social group (r=.25) or a black youngster stealing (r=.34).

Six questions were asked concerning politics and government as they related to the church. This group of questions showed few significant correlations. Those who felt that organized religion is largely irrelevant to society showed a significant positive racial attitude toward their best friend becoming engaged to a black person (r=-.17). Those who felt that organized religion has no business in politics also showed negative racial attitudes toward a black family moving in next door (r=.18), their best friend becoming engaged to a black person (r=.18), a new black person joining their social group (r=.15) and a black youngster stealing (r=.24). This is interesting in light of Stark and Glock's (1969) finding that the church laity are more prejudiced than the clergy and officials of the church and resist attempts of the officials to challenge their prejudices and take a position in favor of civil rights. Those who said they prefer to live in a country where there is a national religion tended to have a more positive racial attitude wher walking alone past a corner where a group of young black men are loitering (r=-.17).

There were significant correlations between sex of the respondent and racial attitude on six of the ten situations. Females seemed to have a more positive racial attitude toward a black family moving next door (r=.17), their best friend becoming engaged to a black person (r=.18), being stopped by a black policeman (r=.18), a new black person joining their social group (r=.22) and a black youngster stealing (r=.17). The females, however, had a more negative attitude toward a black man selling magazines at their door in the evening (r=-.28). This finding is supported by Sedlacek and Brooks (1972b) who interpreted the same finding in terms of the possibility of physical harm or rape. Females may see a threat of harm in the magazine salesman, but safety

in the policeman. They also found females to be more tolerant of blacks in situations I (black family next door), V (friend becomes engaged), VII (person joins social group) and VIII (youngster steals).

The students were also compared on racial attitudes according to family income. The only situation that showed a significant eta correlation ($p<.05$, eta= .37) was VI (stopped by a black policeman). The most positive racial attitude was shown by the over $30,000 income group, while the least positive racial attitude was shown by the lowest income group, $3,000-$8,999. This finding is not consistent with other studies cited by Simpson and Yinger (1965) which indicated that the highest and lowest income groups would be least prejudiced, while middle income groups are more intolerant of blacks.

Conclusions

Several cautions in interpreting the results should be stated. First, many statistical analyses were performed increasing the liklihood of some chance findings. Additionally, many of the correlations were small although all reported were statistically significant at the .05 level. It is particularly important then that we look at the overall nature of the results rather than isolating particular items. In a study of this type we were more willing to tolerate a Type I error (finding significance by chance) to guard against missing an important finding. Future research, however, must confirm or deny the conclusions reached here.

From the demographic data, it can be assumed that these subjects were a fairly religious group. Over half attended church regularly or at least once a month during the last year. Only 13% believed that a person had only his/her own resources to call on; the rest believed in some type of spiritual life.

The relationship between religious and racial attitudes depends on the situation involved as well as the type of religious belief and sex of respondent. Situations IV (walking past a group of black men loitering) and X (getting on a bus full of blacks) had few significant correlations with the religion questions. The other situations, especially VIII (black youngster stealing), VII (new black person joins social group), and II (black man rapes white woman) revealed more information about the relationship between religion and racial prejudice. Situations VII and VIII tended to elicit more positive responses from those who believe in God and life after death and those who are more active in the church. Situation II tended to get a more negative response from the same group.

Many of the questions described above may be difficult to define as more or less religious. Rather a conservative-liberal social attitude distinction might better apply. Thus, those who would marry outside their faith, who would participate in a "Jesus" movement, who think abortion is justified other than when the mother's life is at stake, who cannot conscientiously engage in war, who feel they can be religious without attending church, and who enjoy gospel music sung by soul choirs tend to have more positive racial attitudes. Also, those who feel that organized religion has a place in politics (which in this context could mean a more active role in civil rights) had more positive racial attitudes. Conversely, those with more traditional, or conservative views who tended to disagree with the above issues also tended to be more prejudiced.

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